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International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

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Letter dated 7 May 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the European Union (EU) orientation paper for the European Union's participation in the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, as adopted by the EU Council on 21 April 2004 (see annex). I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the International Meeting.

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Annex to the letter dated 7 May 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

EU Orientation Paper for the International Meeting for the 10-year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States Mauritius, August/September 2004

[Original: English, French and Spanish]

1. The special circumstances of small island developing states — in particular those characteristics that make them economically, environmentally and socially vulnerable to shocks over which they have no control — were recognized by the international community in the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and by the subsequent Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States held in Barbados (25 April-6 May, 1994). In 1999, a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly (New York, 27-28 September) reviewed and appraised the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. The General Assembly adopted a Declaration and a review document entitled "Declaration and state of progress and initiatives for the future implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States".

2. Five years later, we are now facing the 10-year review of the Plan of Action adopted in Barbados — the so-called BPoA. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, agreed in September 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, invites partners to undertake a full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and to hold an International Meeting in Mauritius, scheduled for August 2004.

General Developments since 1994

3. The political context has changed considerably since 1994. New challenges for the SIDS include globalization, health related issues such as HIV/AIDS and SARS, and security issues which now rank much higher on the World's agenda. In addition new global processes have emerged through, inter alia, the Millennium Summit whereby 189 countries, including 147 Heads of State, formulated and endorsed time-bound quantifiable goals to reduce poverty and hunger, stabilize the global environment and ensure the basic rights of all; LDC III; the Doha Development Agenda; the Monterrey Consensus; and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The European Union has now adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as derived from the Millennium Declaration, the goals endorsed at WSSD and the other internationally agreed development goals as its overarching framework for reducing poverty in Developing Countries, including in the SIDS. These goals are therefore seen as fundamental building blocks of global stability in what has become a tightly interconnected world.

4. All of the European Union's response to the BPoA is therefore an integral part of the EU's efforts to support sustainable development and poverty eradication.

These efforts together with the commitments made by the EU in the context of the Monterrey Conference and the work towards a positive outcome of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA), are an essential element of the EU's contribution towards a global partnership for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the goals endorsed at WSSD and the other internationally agreed development goals.

5. For the European Union, the Mauritius Meeting is more than just a 10-year review of a programme of action. Since the Rio Summit, the World has changed considerably. On the one hand the environmental concerns that featured prominently in the 14 priority areas of the BPoA, still form the core of the proposals contained in the Nassau Declaration of 2004, and are still valid; on the other hand the challenges of globalization — both the risks and the opportunities — together with the spreading of HIV/AIDS which have since been addressed inter alia in the Millennium Declaration and emerging issues such as migration and terrorism, require a thorough reflection on how to address the needs of the SIDS.

"UN 2005 Event"

6. The EU therefore sees the Mauritius Meeting as an important event for the major UN review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of and commitments of the major related United Nation Conferences and Summits in 2005.

EU and the SIDS

7. The European Union has a long history of cooperation with many of the SIDS. Through its multilateral assistance programmes, in the framework of the EU-Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (EU ACP) Agreement over the last 20 years and most recently through the framework of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement which entered into force in 2003 and which emphasised the objective of reducing poverty and supporting under-developed and vulnerable economies, the SIDS receive high levels of development assistance from the European Union. Taking into account the bilateral assistance provided by individual EU Member States, the European Union is their largest development partner. The EU is also the main contributor to the World Bank, Regional Banks, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other international financial institutions and mechanisms, which all provide investment capital, technology and technical assistance to SIDS. Some SIDS figure prominently in the list of developing countries receiving the highest per-capita aid.

EU policy for development cooperation

8. The European Union has agreed that its development cooperation policy, which is to be complimentary to the policies pursued by its Member States, shall foster:

- The sustainable economic and social development of the developing countries, and more particularly the most disadvantaged among them;
- The smooth and gradual integration of the developing countries into the world economy;
- The campaign against poverty in the developing countries.

9. This policy, with its strong focus on poverty reduction and which now has a specific legal basis in the Maastricht Treaty, is articulated at the country level where the European Commission and the Member States are committed to working together in a more coordinated way to facilitate the application of a coherent approach in partnership with national authorities to elaborate and implement national strategies for sustainable development, which, where applicable, can be formulated as poverty reduction strategies. The overall EU approach fully supports the recognition in the BPoA that "Governments will be primarily responsible for the implementation of the Programme of Action".

10. Furthermore, the EU believes firmly that the credibility of its focus on poverty reduction rests on the credibility of the LDC status which is premised on a commitment to ensuring that only a limited number of the weakest nations should benefit from this special status and that existing criteria for eligibility are applied in an effective manner allowing for transition measures.

11. In the framework of the Cotonou agreement and according to its rules of procedure, the EU will propose to reinforce the inclusion of the BPOA's priorities as areas of support identified in Country Strategic Papers and National Indicative Programmes of the 9th EDF. The EU intends to take article 32 of the Cotonou Agreement on Environment and Natural resources, fully into consideration when undertaking the CSP mid-term review.

EU Trade Policy

12. The EU is already offering greatly enhanced market access to many SIDS in the framework of the GSP, the Cotonou agreement and the Everything But Arms initiative (duty-and quota-free access granted to LDC exports). It encourages other developed countries as well as the major developing countries to join its efforts, notably in favour of LDCs.

13. The EU is committed to working for a positive sustainable outcome within the bilateral trade negotiations with the ACP aiming to establish development oriented Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and within the framework of the DDA. The EU also contributes to making trade an instrument for sustainable development through complementary actions. In the latter regard, the European Community and its Member States are the largest contributor to international trade related assistance (TRA) programmes. In the bilateral context, EPAs will assist islands and other small economies to overcome the restraints of smallness by supporting regional integration and policies in important trade related areas such as trade facilitation.[1] Within the WTO/DDA context, the EU is supporting progress on identifying measures to help the further integration of small and vulnerable economies into the multilateral trading system.

EU priorities for Mauritius including environmental priorities

14. However, in particular regarding the environmental aspects, the BPoA is still an important starting point for discussing the Sustainable Development of Small

[1] See also the Joint Review on the all ACP-EC phase of EPA negotiations (ACP-EC/NG/NP/43 of 2 October 2003), "(v) Special and differential treatment: Both sides concur that special and differential treatment should be provided to all ACP States, and in particular to LDCs and vulnerable small, landlocked and island countries."

Island Developing States in Mauritius. The recent meeting in Nassau reaffirmed "the continued validity of the BPOA as the fundamental framework for the sustainable development of SIDS" and confirmed that the Plan of Action negotiated in Barbados some ten years ago is still relevant. More recently the WSSD identified SIDS as a "special case both for environment and development" and highlighted specific priorities to which the EU attaches particular importance i.e., climate change, marine and coastal biodiversity, fisheries, exclusive economic zones, fresh water, waste and pollution, sustainable tourism, natural disasters, work on small economies, vulnerability indices, energy and health care as SIDS priorities.

15. While many SIDS have during the last 10 years, made significant achievements in environment management through institutional changes and legislation following on global and regional environmental agreements and also through increased public participation in environmental management and decision-making, these initiatives have not significantly slowed the pace of environmental degradation.

16. Climate change is a case in point. SIDS continue to be critically effected by global climate change to the extent that the very survival of certain low lying countries which are particularly sensitive to changes in the frequency and intensity of rainfall and storms, is under threat. The EU therefore attaches the highest importance to the entry into force and the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol as quickly as possible. Small Island States are also key partners of the European Union in advancing the Climate Change agenda. As stated in the Barbados Programme of Action, Small Island Developing States are particularly vulnerable to global climate change, climate variability and sea level rise. In this connection, the European Union emphasises the importance of the Kyoto Protocol towards reaching the objective of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and that its ratification and implementation is of the highest importance for the Small Island Developing States as well as the international community as a whole. Also related is the important task of the development and use of renewable sources of energy and the dissemination of sound and efficient energy technologies. The GEF has a very instrumental role to play on these matters, in particular through the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) established under the UNFCCC. SIDS will be amongst those countries particularly benefiting from this new facility.

At the national level

The Nassau Declaration, endorsed by the Ministerial SIDS Inter-Regional Preparatory Meeting from 26-30 January 2004 calls *"for greater support for and improved coordination among our development partners for the effective implementation of the BPOA at the national and regional levels."*

17. The European Union would like the Mauritius Meeting to reinforce the importance of national country driven and country owned plans and strategies for poverty reduction and sustainable development .The Mauritius meeting should build on all of the regional and interregional preparatory work carried out by the SIDS and ensure that the priorities identified will be fully reflected in SIDS own national planning processes. For example, the recent Inter-regional meeting at Nassau identified health issues among the new and emerging challenges for SIDS. The EU sees health is a key determinant of sustainable development as identified through the MDGs to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and combat HIV/AIDS

and the other communicable diseases. The EU has already prioritized these issues in its Programme of Action and is in addition committed to supporting the Global Fund in fighting HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

International and regional action

18. The European Union believes that Mauritius should also focus on the role of the international community in supporting these national plans and strategies. Since Barbados, work undertaken at the international level to help SIDS implement the BPoA has included various activities by UN bodies, principally those of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs which with the assistance of a number of partners has assisted in the setting up of a an Internet-based network known as the SIDSnet which provides information and communications support to many small island developing States. Technical assistance and resource mobilisation have also been facilitated through UNDP, UNEP, the GEF and UNCTAD. At the regional level, the UN regional commissions have done much to facilitate the implementation of the BPoA as have indigenous regional bodies such as the CARICOM Secretariat and the South Pacific Forum. While progress has been made the EU believes strongly that there is considerable scope for implementation of the BPOA through further regional coordination and integration initiatives such as that taken in relation to the Caribbean Sea.

Role of the EU

19. The European Union will continue to support the development of Small Island Developing States, taking into account both the EU's general line on poverty reduction and the specific needs of the smaller economies and the importance of links to nationally owned strategies for sustainable development, which, where applicable, can be formulated as poverty reduction strategies. EU assistance primarily through the EU-ACP structure will focus not only on levels of ODA but will also include the promotion of greater harmonisation amongst donors, improved policy coherence and results-oriented monitoring of activities within the overall framework of the Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg POI as well as the BPOA.

SIDS

20. At the Barbados Conference in 1994, the EU stated clearly that while all of the SIDS share certain common characteristics — small scale economies, transportation and accessibility problems, agricultural sectors often dominated by a single crop and a high dependency on imports — they do not constitute a homogenous group. The application of MDG indicators, as defined by the secretariats of the United Nations, OECD, World Bank and IMF, confirm that there continue to be huge differences within the SIDS, ranging from Singapore to Haiti. The average MDG performance of the SIDS is far better than the one of a typical Developing Country with for example, the average life expectancy reaches over 70 years in the SIDS but only 51 years for the least developed countries.

21. SIDS are however, among those small states that are at high *risk to lose* the modest gains that some have acquired over the last decade as they are more exposed to the economic, environmental, and social impacts of globalisation than larger states, and are thus "involuntary pioneers" in facing the challenges that arise from

globalization. The Mauritius Meeting will be a unique occasion to reassess the challenges and opportunities specific to small island states, and to formulate answers also in view of the 2005 review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

22. However, the MDG framework may not be fully adequate to the specific problems of the World's smallest and most vulnerable nations. While not all the vulnerable nations of the world are islands, certain aspects of vulnerability, like rising sea levels and the increased frequency of hurricanes, are indeed island-specific; others, like the low diversification of economies, remoteness and difficult access to markets or high transport costs, apply also to land-locked or coastal small economies.

23. Already in the late 1980's there was discussion on the need for a complementary framework based on the notion of vulnerability. Indeed in 2000, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, world leaders resolved to address the special needs faced by Small Island Developing States "rapidly and in full" by 2015. The Millennium Summit of World Leaders expressed their commitment to address the special needs of Small Island Developing States, by implementing the Barbados Programme of Action and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly rapidly and in full. The Summit also urged the international community to ensure that, in the development of a vulnerability index, the special needs of SIDS are taken into account (General Assembly resolution 55/2, para. 17). More recently, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation endorsed the objective of supporting "the finalization and subsequent operationalization, on agreed terms, of economic, social and environmental vulnerability indices as tools for the achievement of the sustainable development of the SIDS" (para. 58 (i)). The Commission for Sustainable Development has agreed in its work programme to follow up this and other commitments related to SIDS in 2014 and 2015, in line with the overarching target of 2015 stated in the Millennium Declaration.

24. The European Union follows closely the valuable work on economic,[2] social[3] and environmental[4] Vulnerability Indices. Such indices may help to identify and quantify the factors contributing to the complex and very specific problems of SIDS, and thus greatly enhance the debate on effective ways to address their vulnerability, and to increase their ability to adapt and react to events caused by vulnerability, such as economic shocks, environmental disasters or socio-cultural trends. The EU therefore considers that the Mauritius International Meeting should examine the work on Vulnerability Indices and its potential use as valuable tools to deal with the particular issues that SIDS and other small economies are facing. In this context the EU stresses the importance of programmes and measures aimed at

[2] Operationalizing the Economic Vulnerability Index, http://www.sidsnet.org/ungass/docs/LinoBriguglio.html

[3] A pilot index of social vulnerability, with co-funding from the Dutch government, is currently being developed by ECLAC for the CARICOM countries ("In August 1999, the Social Development Unit, ECLAC/CDCC secretariat, formally submitted a project outline for the development of subregional social statistical databases and the construction of a methodology for the construction of a social vulnerability index, (SVI) for Dutch funding, through an ECLAC mechanism. Funds became available in January 2001", Asha Kambon at http://www.caricom.org/CARIStats/Files/Meetings/SCCS28/28thSCCSPaper32.pdf)

[4] South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC, http://www.sopac.org.fj/Projects/Evi/index.html), with co-funding from the Irish Government.

increasing the resilience of the SIDS by building their capacity to react and adapt to economic, social and environmental shocks and trends that are beyond the control of SIDS themselves.

25. The "Strategy Paper" in Annex to the Nassau Declaration provides suggestions for possible action to overcome vulnerability through building *resilience* (i.e., the ability to react to shocks, and to recover from damage), for example through regional integration and cooperation. The EU believes that the Mauritius Meeting should focus on programmes and measures aimed at implementing resilience building measures in close partnership with the vulnerable states themselves and in the context of regional co-operation. The discussions held at the Nassau meeting and the Report of the Secretary-General form a valuable basis for our further preparations for Mauritius.

Conclusion

26. Discussions at Mauritius need to strike a balance between poverty and the special vulnerabilities of SIDS.

Poverty as defined through the MDG framework is well covered by the existing instruments of development cooperation, in which most of the SIDS are participating through the Cotonou agreement; for each MD goal, associated targets, and indicators to monitor their achievement, have been agreed. See Annex attached.

Beyond the achievement of the MDGs, we should consider how to address, in the context of existing instruments and through tailored approaches, the specific needs of SIDS to build up resilience capacities, in order to avoid the risk of falling back into poverty due to their vulnerability to economic, environmental and social events beyond the control of small economies.

Annex: The Millennium Development Goals

Goals and targets (from the Millennium Declaration)	Indicators for monitoring progress
Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	
Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than less than one dollar a day	1a. Proportion of population below $1 (PPP) per day[a] 1b. Poverty headcount ratio (% of population below the national poverty line) 2. Poverty gap ratio [incidence *x* depth of poverty] 3. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption
Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger	4. Prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age 5. Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education	
Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling	6. Net enrolment ratio in primary education 7a. Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 7b. Primary completion rate 8. Literacy rate of 15–24 year-olds
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women	
Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015	9. Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education 10. Ratio of literate women to men 15–24 years old 11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector 12. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality	
Target 5: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate	13. Under-five mortality rate 14. Infant mortality rate 15. Proportion of 1 year-old children immunised against measles

Goal 5: Improve maternal health	
Target 6: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio	16. Maternal mortality ratio
	17. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	
Target 7: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS	18. HIV prevalence among 15–24 year old pregnant women
	19. Condom use rate of the contraceptive prevalence rate[b]
	19a. Condom use at last high-risk sex
	19b. Percentage of population aged 15-24 with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS[c]
	19c. Contraceptive prevalence rate
	20. Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10–14
Target 8: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases	21. Prevalence and death rates associated with malaria
	22. Proportion of population in malaria risk areas using effective malaria prevention and treatment measures[d]
	23. Prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis
	24. Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment treatment short course (DOTS)
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability	
Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources	25. Proportion of land area covered by forest
	26. Ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area
	27. Energy use (kg oil equivalent) per $1 GDP (PPP)
	28. Carbon dioxide emissions (per capita) and consumption of ozone-depleting CFCs (ODP tons)
	29. Proportion of population using solid fuels
Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation	30. Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban and rural
	31. Proportion of urban and rural population with access to improved sanitation
Target 11: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers	32. Proportion of households with access to secure tenure

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development	
Target 12: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system Includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally	*Some of the indicators listed below are monitored separately for the least developed countries (LDCs), Africa, landlocked countries and small island developing States.* Official development assistance
Target 13: Address the special needs of the least developed countries Includes: tariff and quota free access for least developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for HIPC and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction	33. Net ODA, total and to LDCs, as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income 34. Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation) 35. Proportion of bilateral ODA of OECD/DAC donors that is untied
Target 14: Address the special needs of landlocked countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly)	36. ODA received in landlocked countries as proportion of their GNIs 37. ODA received in small island developing States as proportion of their GNIs
	Market access
	38. Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and LDCs, admitted free of duties 39. Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries 40. Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as percentage of their GDP 41. Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity
Target 15: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term	Debt sustainability 42. Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative) 43. Debt relief committed under HIPC initiative, US$ 44. Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services
Target 16: In co-operation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth	45. Unemployment rate of 15-24 year-olds, each sex and total[e]
Target 17: In co-operation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable, essential drugs in developing countries	46. Proportion of population with access to affordable, essential drugs on a sustainable basis
Target 18: In co-operation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications	47. Telephone lines and cellular subscribers per 100 population 48a. Personal computers in use per 100 population and Internet users per 100 population 48b. Internet users per 100 population